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Allegiance

SwampClan

Leader: Mudstar - Brown spotted tabby tom with bright yellow eyes

Deputy: Leopardheart - Golden she-cat with black and golden spots and light green eyes

Medicine Cat: Flintberry - Bright stone-gray tom with dark grey dapples

Warriors:

Ospreytail- Glossy brown tom with white dapples on his chest

Ripplefang - Silver tom with dark grey stripes

Sootflame - Silver she-cat with a black muzzle, paws, and tail tip **(Apprentice: Marshpaw)**

Owlfoot - Black she-cat with dark grey splotches **(Apprentice: Yarrowpaw)**

Galeface - Light gray tom

Salttail - Young silver she-cat with white dappled legs

Blackcloud - Fuzzy black tom

Apprentices:

Yarrowpaw - Yellow ticked tabby tom

Marshpaw - Golden mackerel tabby she-cat with oak brown stripes

Queens:

Frogleg - Black she-cat with yellow splotches (Mother to Ripplefang's kits; Fernkit and Stonekit)

Oakpelt - Dark brown she-cat with a darker brown tail and ears (Mother to Ospreytail's kits; Goosekit, Jaykit, and Swankit)

Tallears - White she-cat with black dapples (Expecting Blackcloud's kits)

Kits:

Fernkit - Black she-kit with orange splotches

Stonekit - Grey she-kit with black stripes

Goosekit - Fuzzy brown she-kit

Jaykit - Grey-brown tom kit with darker paws, underbelly, ears, and tail-tip

Swankit - Silver tom kit with a dark grey chest and belly

Elders:

Doefoot - Dark yellow she-cat

Littlenose - Small, frail white she-cat with large black splotches; former deputy

ValleyClan

Leader: Acornstar - Reddish-brown cat

Deputy: Timberwing - Dark brown she-cat

Medicine Cat: Woollystem - Fuzzy grey she-cat

Warriors:

Tangledpelt - Tall calico she-cat with long fur

Brindlestripe - Silver tabby tom

Thunderfoot - Orange she-cat with black tabby stripes **(Apprentice: Flowerpaw)**

Spotcloud - Tortoiseshell she-cat with unusually long claws **(Apprentice: Cherrypaw)**

Pineleg - Deep pale tom with dark brown stripes and tail

Snowspark - White tom with storm grey splotches **(Apprentice: Violetpaw)**

Windstripe - Brown tabby tom

Petaltail - Small stone-grey she-cat

Oakeyes - Brown tabby tom with forest green eyes

Longpelt - Light golden-brown tabby tom with long fur

Apprentices:

Violetpaw - Silver ticked tabby she-cat with dark blue eyes

Cherrypaw - Dark ginger she-cat

Flowerpaw - Fluffy dark blue-gray tom

Queens:

Minnowpelt - Brown-gray she-cat (Mother to Pineleg's kits; Pouncekit and Tawnykit)

Yellowmask - Golden tabby she-cat (Mother to Windstripe's kits; Rabbitkit and Mousekit)

Birdfoot - Large, musculature brown calico she-cat (Mother to Snowspark's kits; Coyotekit and Badgerkit)

Kits:
Pouncekit - Brown tabby she-kit with orange ears

Tawnykit - Tawny tom-kit with bright blue eyes

Rabbitkit - Golden tabby tom-kit

Mousekit - Light brown mottled she-kit

Coyotekit - Brown dappled tom-kit

Badgerkit - Black tom-kit with silver tabby stripes

Elders:

Blazefur - Orange dappled she-cat

Timberwing - Dark brown she-cat

Warblerfeather - Dark ginger tom with a black muzzle and ears

IcyClan

Leader: Sandstar - Light sand-colored she-cat with a white belly and white dapples

Deputy: Torrentfang - Shabby grey tom **(Apprentice: Flickerpaw)**

Medicine Cats:

Silverleaf - Silver tabby tom with dark grey stripes and green eyes

Aspenwing - Light grey she-cat

Warriors:

Shelltail - Dark grey tom with silver specks **(Apprentice: Cedarpaw)**

Briarclaw- Silver mottled she-cat

Daisypelt - Pure white she-cat

Dawntalon - White tom with yellow patches

Sundapple - Light golden tabby she-cat with golden dapples

Graynose - Silver-grey spotted tom **(Apprentice: Beepaw)**

Tumblemuzzle - Small calico she-cat **(Apprentice: Frondpaw)**

Willowflower - Tortishell-and-white she-cat

Birdflight - Dusty brown tom with blue eyes

Apprentices:

Frondpaw - White tabby tom

Beepaw - Cream-White tortoiseshell she-cat

Flickerpaw - White she-cat with bright yellow stripes and spots

Cedarpaw - Light grey tom

Queens:

Cottonfur - Ginger she-cat with silver patches (Mother to Shelltail's kit; Nightkit)

Kits:

Nightkit - Black tabby tom-kit

Elders:

Reedpelt - Pure white tom with unusual blue eyes; deaf

Leafclaw - Silver she-cat

Prolouge

Mudwhisker approached a small flower, glowing in the moonlight. Flintberry stood beside him in the cave, as Mudwhisker touched his nose to the flower, and his world collapsed. He awoke in StarClan, with nine deceased cats surrounding him. One by one, each cat gave him a life.

After he received his final life from his former leader, Grassstar, everything went black. He felt himself being pinned to the ground. He squirmed under the weight of something. He looked around fearfully, but he could see nothing but darkness. He tried to swipe at the thing holding him down, but his claws just swiped air. Mudwhisker then felt claws piercing his stomach. He yowled, his heart pounding.

"Do you really want the clan to be led by blindness?" A voice said. The brown spotted tom couldn't identify who said those words, or *what* said those words.

Suddenly, Mudwhisker, now Mudstar, awoke. He scanned the cave he was in and saw Flintberry sitting beside him. "We should get back now," Flintberry spoke.

As the two toms walked back to their clan, Mudstar started to speak. "I got this weird omen after I received my lives." The spotted leader spoke. "I was completely blinded, and something attacked me. I couldn't fight back, at all. Then, a voice told me something." Mudstar paused.

"Do you really want the clan to be led by blindness..." The gray medicine cat echoed those words. Mudstar stared in shock, wondering how Flintberry knew. "I've received that omen too. Just before Grassstar's death." The stone-gray tom explained as they pushed past reeds to enter SwampClan.

Mudstar leaped onto a sleek, large rock, that was still damp from last night's rain. "All cats able to step in the marshes, gather around

the Damp Rock for a clan meeting." After Mudstar said those words, the clan gathered around the Damp Rock, their eyes bright. "I have received my nine lives from StarClan," The leader announced. The clan cheered. "And now it is time for me to pick SwampClan's new deputy." Mudstar scanned the warriors.

One she-cat stuck out the most. That cat was Mudstar's mate, Leopardheart. Her yellow spotted pelt glistened in the sunrise. She is one of the strongest and most ambitious warriors in the clan. Their kits, Marshpaw and Yarrowpaw, have recently been apprenticed, so Leopardheart was back to being a warrior. "Leopardheart. You've always been an amazing warrior. And I want you to be my deputy." Leopardheart felt a tang of pride inside her.

"It would be an honor." The yellow she-cat purred.

Chapter 1

"Stonekit, step forth." Mudstar spoke, while the clan was gathered around the Damp Rock. "From this moment forward, until you receive your warrior name, you shall be known as Stonepaw." Stonepaw purred when she heard her name. Fernpaw sighed, as she listened from the medicine den. "Your mentor shall be Leopardheart." The SwampClan leader announced. The clan gasped. Stonepaw surged with even more excitement.

"Those herbs aren't going to sort themselves, Fernpaw." Flintberry reminded his apprentice. The black she-cat let out one last huff, before whiffing the herbs and placing them in piles. "I know you want to be a warrior like your littermate," The gray tom started, "But StarClan made you blind for a reason. You were destined to become a medicine cat."

The splotched she-cat hated hearing those words. Fernpaw was born blind, and it became very noticeable when she first opened her eyes. Ever since then, the whole clan has been pressuring her to become a medicine cat, especially her mother, Frogleg.

"Stonepaw! Stonepaw! Stonepaw!" The chanting outside grew louder and louder.

"Flintberry! Fernpaw!" A voice called from what sounded like the entrance of the den. That voice was none other than Goosepaw's. "My throat hurts!" The dark brown she-cat complained, stepping further into the den. She'd flick her sleek tail in Fernpaw's direction.

"Maybe it's because you complain too much." Fernpaw hissed at the other apprentice.

"Whatever. Just get me some herbs and I'll be out of your fur." Goosepaw retorted. The medicine cat apprentice reluctantly stood and sniffed around the shelves of the den. She scented the rich, sweet scent of honey. She carefully grabbed the leaf that it rested on. The medicine cat placed the leaf in front of Goosepaw.

Goosepaw licked up the honey without hesitation. She didn't say a word before trotting out of the den.

"You're welcome." Fernpaw huffed. Flintberry always use to tell her that medicine cats were some of the most important cats in the clan, but Fernpaw always felt disrespected and overshadowed by the warriors.

Flintberry gazed at his sorrowful apprentice. "How about we go collect some herbs?" The stone-grey tom suggested.

"Do I have to?" Fernpaw sighed, rolling her sightless eyes.

"It's part of being a medicine cat," Flintberry added. "Besides, you should get some fresh air. The forest in new-leaf is always the best."

The medicine cat apprentice sighed and reluctantly stood. "Fine, we can collect herbs, but not for long."

The two cats soon made their way into the forest. The new-leaf breeze ruffled their pelts, as it shook the trees around them. Fernpaw felt blossom petals below her paws, telling her that they were being blown from out of the trees. The strong scent of prey flooded the she-cat's nose. She felt a strong urge to pounce on something and sink her teeth into it, hoping to taste the blood of it. But Fernpaw knew that she could never hunt. Her sight would never allow it.

"See? The forest isn't so bad." Flintberry retorted. The two SwanpClan cats soon reach the border of SwampClan and ValleyClan. The fresh smell of watermint filled the air, but a new scent was there too. A scent Fernpaw has never smelled before.

It was tangy, with the smell of earth and grass mixed together. The trace of vole and crow was mixed in with it. "What's that scent?" The apprentice questioned.

"That is the smell of ValleyClan." Flintberry mewed through the bundle of watermint he was carrying. Fernpaw picked up a bundle as well, and they both walked back to camp.

Back at camp, Fernpaw sat in the clearing chowing down on a fresh

frog. "Hey, Fernpaw!" Jaypaw, another apprentice purred. "How's the frog I caught?"

"It's okay." Fernpaw sighed, taking another bite. "I just wish I could hunt prey of my own. Not sit around all day giving Goosepaw some honey or getting mousebile for elders. I want to fight for my clan. I want to provide food for them."

"Oh, I'm so sorry." Jaypaw sighed, flicking his dark gray-and-brown tail. "I should be in my way. The sundown patrol will be leaving soon." The tom dashed off.

Later that night, when the moon was nearly at its highest peak, Fernpaw was curled up in her nest in the medicine den. Suddenly, a cold, wet nose nudged her. "Fernpaw!" Jaypaw hissed in Fernpaw's ear. The medicine cat apprentice awoke, startled by the tom's presents.

"What do you want this late at night?" Fernpaw stood, stretching out her back.

"I'm going to train you," Jaypaw whispered.

"Train me?" The black she-chat questioned.

"Yes. Train you as if you were training to become a warrior." The gray-brown apprentice answered. Fernpaw stood in shock. Jaypaw already had three moons of training, and for him to want to teach Fernpaw came as a complete shock. Her mouth hung wide open, and so did her eyes. Every last bit of tiredness in her body rushed right out of her.

A short walk later, the two apprentices were in the forest. The swamp gushed next to them, as they approached a towering tree. Fernpaw lifted her nose and scented moss, climbing up the tree from the roots and upwards. "Now, all you have to do is rake the moss off the tree by stretching your claws out and scraping it off." The older apprentice instructed. Fernpaw was about to question him, but she held her tongue, being grateful Jaypaw is taking time out of his night to train her.

It took a few tries, but Fernpaw was finally able to scrape a bundle of moss off of the tree. She carefully grabbed it in her jaws. "Good job! Blackcloud told me that when you stretch your claws while collecting moss, it makes you better at fighting and hunting." Jaypaw recited what his mentor told him. "Now we should get back to camp. You can keep the moss in the medicine den. It might come in handy."

The two apprentices then trotted back to camp. Fernpaw, for once, felt proud of herself, like she was capable of taking care of her clan. As if she was worth something. She didn't care what StarClan had to say about her destiny. She didn't care about StarClan at all. She never did.

Chapter 2

It was the moon was sinking in the sky when Jaypaw and Fernpaw crawled back into camp. "It's been two moons are you already fight like a senior warrior!" The older apprentice complimented. Jaypaw has been training Fernpaw as if she was a warrior, from hunting to fighting, and she even became familiar with the territories and their scents. She was picking up everything very well. She once even beat Jaypaw in battle. The two apprentices dipped back into camp.

"Where were you two?" Leopardheart sat in the clearing.

"Leopardheart! What are you doing up so late at night?" Jaypaw questioned the golden deputy, nervously chuckling. The deputy then pointed to the sky with her muzzle. The sun was rising. The sunrise patrol would be heading out soon.

"Jaypaw said he had a really bad cough, and we didn't have any tansy, so we went to get him some." Fernpaw stepped in. The yellow she-cat scoffed, then padded off. Jaypaw let out a sigh of relief.

"Thanks for the help, Fernpaw." The brown-gray apprentice smiled. Soon enough, the clan started waking up. Mudstar leaped onto the Damp Rock, and Leopardheart sat below him.

"All cats able to step in the marshes, gather around the Damp Rock for a clan meeting!" Mudstar yowled. The clan gathered around the Damp Rock. Jaypaw and Fernpaw followed. "Today, I am honored to say that yesterday evening, my two kits past their final assessments." Mudstar gazed at Yarrowpaw and Marshpaw fondly. "Marshpaw, Yarrowpaw, do you promise to uphold the warrior code and defend the clan, even at the cost of your life?" The brown spotted tabby asked, already knowing the answer.

"I do." The two apprentices mewed, nearly in sync.

"Then, by the powers of StarClan, I shall give you your warrior

names. Marshpaw, from this day forward, you shall be known as Marshpelt, for your courage and strength. Yarrowpaw, from this day forward, you shall be known as Yarrowfall, for your bravery and determination. We welcome you as full warriors of SwampClan."

"Marshpelt! Yarrowfall! Marshpelt! Yarrowfall!" The clan chanted.

Fernpaw sighed. "I wish I could have a warrior ceremony." She mumbled under her breath, before ducking back into the medicine den. Fernpaw did nothing but sort herbs, review them, and give Goosepaw juniper berries because she decided to eat some extra prey.

"Now, comfrey root is used for broken bones to help soothe them," Flintberry went on and on about herbs. It felt like he'd been speaking for forever. Suddenly, a screech rippled from the nursery. Flintberry and Fernpaw rushed to see Tallears, panting and screeching.

"She's kitting," Flintberry mewed. "You remember what herbs we use, right? Go ahead and grab them," Fernpaw obeyed and dashed to the medicine den. She scented the chervil and raspberry leaves and snatched them up. Fernpaw skitted back to the nursery. Flintberry took the herbs from his apprentice.

"Good. Now go get a stick and damp moss." Flintberry instructed.

"But there's no time to gather moss!" Fernpaw retorted.

"Just find some and soak it," The stone-gray medicine cat flicked his tail. Fernpaw found a smooth stick right outside the medicine den, and she brought it back to the nursery. Suddenly, she remembered the moss that she and Jaypaw collected two moons ago! And it was still clean! Fernpaw rummaged through the shelves of the medicine den until she scented the moss. She quickly soaked the moss ball into a clean puddle and ran back to the nursery with it.

"Great. Now put the moss on Tallears's head to cool her down." Flintberry instructed. Fernpaw swiftly complied and placed the damp moss ball on the queen's head.

The birth was long and complicated. Blackcloud watched from outside, pacing with anticipation. Right before moonrise, four kits have been born. "Congratulations, Tallears. One tom and three she-kits." Flintberry announced. Blackcloud came tumbling in.

"Could we name this one Boulderkit?" Blackcloud pointed to the brown tom.

"Of course." Tallears chuckled. "And we can name the dark brown she-kit Hazelkit."

"And maybe we could call the dark gray she-kit Coldkit?" Blackcloud said.

"Yes. That's perfect. And we'll call the ginger tabby she-kit Tigerkit." Tallears spoke.

"Congratulations on your first litter. But now Fernpaw and I should be heading to the half-moon meeting." Flintberry added, slipping out of the den. Fernpaw quickly followed.

As the two SwampClan cats trotted through the swamps, Flintberry started talking. "You got through that difficult birth with ease. I think you're ready to share tongues with StarClan."

Fernpaw gasped. A medicine cat apprentice had to earn sharing tongues with StarClan. Doing so was a way of informing StarClan that they will be a loyal medicine cat for as long as they served their clan. All of the apprentice's work, all of her training, all of her hope, all her values vanished in a heartbeat.

Soon enough, the two SwampClan cats reached the Moon Hollow. It scented like mist. It had the cold rush of leaf-bare. The scent of mint was fresh just like leaf-bare, the tangy scent of fresh grass just like green-leaf, the scent of blossoms just like new-leaf, and the scent of fresh prey just like in leaf-fall, the Moon Hollow has every scent you could think of. Even the earth and grassy smell of ValleyClan. Even the shallow watery and minty scent of IcyClan. Even the swampy and muddy scent of SwampClan.

The two cats ducked inside, to find all the other medicine cats

waiting. Silverleaf, the IcyClan medicine cat, along with his apprentice, Aspenwing, were next to a Moon Stone. Woollystem, the ValleyClan medicine cat, was in another corner with her new apprentice, Adderpaw. "This is Adderpaw's first time at a half-moon meeting. Fernpaw, could you explain to her what each one of the Moons means?" Woollystem requested. It was a tradition to have the youngest medicine cat or apprentice explain what each Moon meant to a new medicine cat apprentice.

"The Moon Stones are for any cat on any occasion." Fernpaw turned to her right, imagining how the Moon Stones would look. Glowing from the moonlight, large and pointed. "The Moon Stream is for us medicine cats at half-moon." Fernpaw pictured a mellow flowing stream, sparkling in the night. "And finally, there's the Moon Flower. That's for leaders when they get their nine lives." Fernpaw recalled all the details she's been told about the Moon Flower. White petals that glow a light blue when the moon shines on them, with its stem glowing faintly.

"Thank you Fernpaw." Woollystem dipped her head. "Any news to share?"

"I have discovered that foxglove seeds can also help the heart" Silverleaf added. Flintberry gasped.

"But those are poisonous!" The SwampClan medicine cat retorted.

"Yes, but Leafclaw was suffering from heart failure and we didn't have the herbs to save her, so to stop her from suffering any longer, I gave her foxglove seeds. She then surprisingly recovered." Silverleaf explained. "They should be only used as a last resort." Silverleaf finished.

"I guess it's time, then." Flintberry smiled at his apprentice. "Tonight, Fernpaw will be sharing tongues with StarClan."

The medicine cats, except for Adderpaw, walked over to the Moon Stream. Flintberry beckoned Fernpaw over. Fernpaw reluctantly stood next to her mentor. Flintberry bent his head down near the water, waiting for Fernpaw to do the same. Fernpaw slowly lowered her head, her heart pounding.

"Come on, Fernpaw. It will be sunrise any moment. All you have to do is touch the water with your nose." Flintberry beckoned.

The SwampClan apprentice then snapped her head up. "No! I refuse!" She yowled. The other medicine cats gasped, the loudest coming from Flintberry.

"But Fernpaw, you have to!" Aspenwing mewed.

"You can't make me! I want to be a warrior and that's my decision! I don't even have faith in StarClan!" Fernpaw then darted for the exit of the hollow, just as the sun started to rise. Silverleaf leaped in her way, but the orange-splotched she-cat slid under him, just like Jaypaw taught her in her training. Fernpaw sprinted back to camp, ignoring all the cats behind her. She reached the SwampClan camp, and she slid into the clearing.

Just as Mudstar was leaving his den, Fernpaw yowled, "Make me a warrior apprentice!"

The clan gave her suspicious looks. Marshpelt chuckled in the distance. "Do you really think a blind little medicine cat like *you* could ever become a warrior? Never in a blue moon!" Marshpelt mocked. "How are you going to hunt if you can't even see? What if we get attacked? What are you gonna do? Talk them to death?" The golden she-cat mewed, with a chuckle in her voice.

"Oh, I'll show you what I'm capable of!" The black she-cat screeched, before leaping onto Marshpelt, her claws unsheathed. She raked her claws down Marshpelt's shoulder, her blind eyes filled with rage.

The golden warrior screeched and kicked the medicine cat apprentice off her. Fernpaw got right back up and twisted around Marshpelt. Fernpaw chomped down on Marshpelt's beautiful brown tail. The warrior whipped around and snapped at Fernpaw's ear. Fernpaw could year yowls from her clanmates to stop, but she couldn't be bothered.

Fernpaw clawed Marshpelt's flank, causing her to howl in pain and let go of Fernpaw's ear. The black apprentice let go of the warrior's

tail and scraped the top of her head. Fernpaw's claws left a huge scar there. As Marshpelt stumbled backward, Fernpaw pinned her shoulders to the ground.

"Enough!" Mudstar boomed. The whole clan turned their attention to their leader.
Flintberry then came rushing into camp. "Fernpaw-"

"There will be no need to send her to half-moon anymore." Mudstar interrupted. "As Fernpaw has proved she can train as a warrior." Frogleg and Ripplefang heard those words and yowled with protests. Mudstar turned his gaze to them. "I know you're both worried for your daughter, but she has proven she can handle the life of a warrior." Fernpaw was frozen, overwhelmed with joy. She felt as if she could burst with happiness. "If I may ask, where did you learn to fight like that, Fernpaw?" The spotted leader questioned.

"Jaypaw taught me everything. How to hunt, how to fight, even how to gather moss." Fernpaw explained. Jaypaw's pelt heated up as the clan turned towards him.
"Jaypaw," Mudstar spoke. "If you can teach a blind cat how to fight like a senior warrior, I believe you are ready for your warrior assessment." He'd say. "And Fernpaw, your mentor shall be Ospreytail. He's our most loyal senior warrior, and I trust him to pass down his knowledge to you." Mudstar added.

"Fernpaw! Fernpaw!" The clan chanted once more.

Chapter 3

A moon has passed since Fernpaw was named a warrior apprentice. Jaypaw had earned his warrior name, Jaysong. Ospreytail led his apprentice to the edge of the swamps, close to the forest. Fernpaw was only a mouse-tail behind him. Ruffles of small blades of grass could be heard nearby. The scent of a water vole was near. "Hear that?" Ospreytail spoke. "I want you to catch it."

Fernpaw was already in her hunting crouch. She listened for the vole's every move. It's scent was right in front of her. The black apprentice slowly creeped forward, then pounced on the vole, killing it with a swift bite to the neck. "Good job, Fernpaw." Ospreytail complimented his apprentice.

"This is a border patrol, not a hunting patrol," Sootflame called, flicking her tail back to the patrol.

"Every patrol should be a learning experience." The senior warrior retorted.
"I'll bury that vole for you." Stonepaw offered. The silver she-cat snatched the vole from her sister's jaw, then started prancing toward another patch of the ground.

"You're lucky you have someone to look after you," Marshpelt growled in Fernpaw's ear.
Ugh. Will I ever hear the end of this cat? Fernpaw huffed to herself. Soon enough, the patrol reached the wetlands. IcyClan's new deputy has been trying to take SwampClan's side of the wetlands for a few moons, and even succeeded once. Since the wetlands are right on the very border of the two clans. But they were quickly overthrown. Ospreytail then flicked his tail down and swept low, singling for the patrol to get down.

"I smell IcyClan." The senior warrior growled. Ospreytail then peered out of the shrubs and whiffed the air. "It's fresh. They must have been here recently." The glossy tom hissed.

"They weren't here *recently,* they're here *right now*." Fernpaw added, her fur bristling. "I smell them. They're surrounding the place." The patrol then slowly turned their heads behind them, only to hear a yowl from the distance.

"IcyClan! Attack!" The yowl came from Torrentfang, the IcyClan deputy. Suddenly, clusters of light-furred cats cane swarming in, claws all unsheathed.

"I'll go get help!" Galeface called, before disappearing. Fernpaw lunged at the first IcyClan cat she scented. The cat smelled like a young apprentice, maybe just seven moons old. Fernpaw scraped her claw down what seemed to be the IcyClan cat's chest. The tom yowled, then slipped under Fernpaw, raking her belly. The black apprentice then stomped on the tom, then pinned his shoulders down to the cold dirt below them. She then swooped near his eye, causing him to flinch. The tom slipped out from under her and scurried away.

Fernpaw suddenly felt herself being pinned. Another cat, who seemed to be an older warrior, scraped his claws down her back. The blind apprentice screeched for help. Then, she felt the weight of the warrior being knocked off her shoulders.

"Your welcome," Marshpelt spoke. "Without me, you would have been crow-food." The warrior snickered, before going back to battle.

"Retreat!" Ospreytail howled into the air. The fighting stopped, as the SwampClan warriors scrambled back to camp.

"We lost?" Fernpaw questioned. Ospreytail gave a slight chuckle.

"Who said we lost?" The senior warrior purred, as a larger patrol of SwampClan warriors charged at the wetlands. "We just faked losing. They'll never expect the second wave."

Fernpaw lit up, as she and the rest of the patrol charged back at the wetlands. She threw herself at an IcyClan warrior and started nipping at her neck, as Stonepaw and Ripplefang bit down at her paws. The senior warrior yowled in surprise, then turned around to try to swipe at Ripplefang but failed. The senior IcyClan warrior

shook the SwampClan warriors off and retreated.

Yarrowfall and Goosepaw fought side-by-side, as Jaysong and Swanpaw teamed up on a large warrior. The two brothers started to struggle as another large warrior came to assist her clanmate. Fernpaw charged at one of the warriors, but the she-cat knocked her down. She felt herself being pinned, as the warrior chomped down on her throat. Fernpaw squirmed like a newborn kit, trying to get out of there. She then felt claws sink into her chest. Any deeper and she would be killed. The large she-cat finally let the apprentice go.

"Fernpaw! You're hurt! Get back to camp!" Ospreytail ordered. Fernpaw reluctantly obeyed, rushing back to camp, her chest leaving a trail of blood. She padded over to the scent of herbs and blood. Flintberry turned to his former apprentice.

"Oh, Fernpaw! You're able to treat yourself, right? I'm a little busy with Marshpelt at the moment." The stone-grey tom mewed. Fernpaw huffed, feeling for the ferns in the herb storage. She cleaned out her wounds with it, then scented the goldenrod and marigold from the shelf and wrapped them into the wound on her neck. She then grabbed the cobweb and placed it on her bleeding chest. She then curled up in the nest next to Marshpelt.

"You did some good fighting, for a blind cat anyways." The golden warrior scoffed. Fernpaw's ears perked up in shock.

"Oh, thank you." The black apprentice mewed.

"Don't get used to it." The tabby hissed. Soon enough, the clan returned, some of them wounded, but not too badly. Mudstar then yowled from the Damp Rock, calling a clan meeting.

"It is time for two apprentices to become warriors. They fought courageously in that battle. Goosepaw, Swanpaw, step forward." The two littermates took a paw step forward. Swanpaw hesitates for a slight moment, but then he stepped a little closer. "From this day forward, Goosepaw, you shall be known as Goosetail, for your bravery and strength. Swanpaw, you shall be known as Swanheart, for your strong morals." The brown leader mewed.

"Goosetail! Swanheart!" The clan cheered. The two new warriors joined Blackcloud and Ripplefang, their mentors, to go hunting. It was a tradition to hunt with your mentor after being made a warrior.

"You know, I don't like you, but I admire your skills at the same time. Jaysong trained you well. Maybe a bit *too* well." Marshpelt mewed suspiciously.

"Why do you not like me?" Fernpaw questioned. "What did I do to you?"

"Well," Marshpelt hissed, "You gave me this huge scar on my head, you interrupt my sleep by being so loud, you're always so demanding and stubborn, and you act as if you were a flawless senior warrior when you've only had three moons of training." The tabby finished.

"So? You're always stuck up and mean." Fernpaw retorted.

"Deal with it," Marshpelt snarled. "At least I'm not giving my clanmates huge scars. You didn't even get in trouble for it!"

"Yes, I did! I had to clean out the elder's den for a half-moon after every training session!" The black molly retorted.

"Here's the poppy seeds, as you requested." Flintberry dropped some poppy seeds in front of Marshpelt, and she didn't hesitate to scarf them down.

Fernpaw took the time to get a nice whiff of the den. The smell of herbs made her realize how lucky she was to become a warrior someday. Fernpaw then flashed back to the day at Moon Stream, when she was supposed to share tongues with StarClan. Fernpaw didn't even have faith in StarClan, ever since the clan told her she was blind because of StarClan. But the weight of her secret weighed her down. "Hey, Flintberry, could I tell you something?" Fernpaw called.

"Yes, of course." The tom trotted over. "What is it?"

Fernpaw inhaled a sharp breath. "Listen, I don't have faith in

StarClan," The medicine cat nearly stumbled backward, but steadied himself.

"Uh, t-that's alright. You can have faith in whatever you'd like. I'll be here to support you no matter what." Flintberry touched his nose on his former apprentice's head, before going back to sorting herbs.

"You don't have faith in StarClan?" Marshpelt snapped. "No wonder why they made you blind, you ungrateful toad!" The golden tabby yowled for the whole clan to hear. There were many gasps from outside.

"How could you?" Frogleg, Fernpaw's own mother, stormed up to the injured apprentice. "I thought me and Ripplefang raised you well! StarClan gave you life, they give us the prey we eat every day, they do so much for us, and you disrespect them!" The yellow-splotched warrior hissed.

"Frogleg, calm down." Ripplefang walked behind his mate. "She's still our daughter, whether she believes in StarClan or not. And that doesn't change the fact that she'll make an amazing warrior." The tom led his mate away from the medicine den. Frogleg's irritated growls could still be heard. Jaysong and Stonepaw trotted up to Fernpaw, looking slightly concerned.

"Hey, I'm sorry about our mother," The tabby apprentice started. "I'll love and support you no matter what you believe." Stonepaw purred, burring her muzzle into her sister's head.

"I'll also support you no matter what. You're my best friend." Jaysong purred, his pelt turning hot.

"Thank you. I'm so lucky to have you guys." Fernpaw mewed, her ears folding back. Marshpelt scoffed as Flintberry joined the cats.

"I guess I could somewhat respect your beliefs," Marshpelt grumbled. "Just keep them away from me, I don't want StarClan to think what you think,"

"As I shall respect yours. Thank you." Fernpaw purred. She wrapped her tail around her sister, and she leaned into Jaysong's heated pelt.

Flintberry rested his tail tip on his former apprentice's shoulder. Marshpelt watched from a distance, turning hot from jealousy, or maybe something else.

Chapter 4

Fernpaw leaped onto Ospreytail's back and gently shook his tuft. The tom stumbled back, as Fernpaw turned to the warrior's side, and slid her paws down his stomach. Ospreytail leaped away, and jumped backward, kicking off from a tree, and landing on Fernpaw, pinning her down. Ospreytail gently nipped at his apprentice's neck, mimicking a killing bite. "Nice try. Next time, try to be a bit swifter." Ospreytail spoke.

"What was that move you use?" The orange-splotched apprentice mewed in response.

"That was the Jump and Pin. I'll teach you that when you're older." The tom said. "For now, why don't you practice with Stonepaw?"

Fernpaw trotted over near Stonepaw and Leopardheart. They were also practicing battle moves. Fernpaw sat down nearby and listened. Stonepaw used a front paw blow on her mentor, then slid under her, raking her belly. The deputy then lightly bit down on her apprentice's ear, and swiped her paws at her face. The silver apprentice paused, then nipped at Leopardheart's spotted paw. Leopardheart let go of her apprentice, as her apprentice knocked her sideways with a back kick.

"Good job, now how about you spar with your sister?" The deputy suggested. Fernpaw and Stonepaw circled each other, until Fernpaw finally leaped forward, pinning down her littermate. Stonepaw then jabbed her paws into Fernpaw's chest. The black apprentice yowled and staggered off of her sister. Stonepaw then tried to back-kick her littermate, but Fernpaw leaped out of the way and nipped at Stonepaw's lashing tail. Fernpaw then swiped roughly at Stonepaw's flank, knocking her over.

"Good sparing." Stonepaw purred.

"Good sparing indeed. I might as well teach you the Jump and Pin now." Ospreytail passed over. Ospreytail and Fernpaw soon trotted

deeper into the forest. They soon found a marshy-open field, with tall, sturdy trees. "Now, what you do is leap backwards, and push off a tree. Then you aim for your opponent, with your claws stretched out." The SwampClan warrior leaped back, and bounced off the tree, keeping his claws stretched in front of him. He landed on a large rock, scraping it. Fernpaw tried to mimic her mentor's move, yet she missed the rock and tumbled onto the wet grass.

"It can be difficult to master. It takes lots of practice. Why don't we practice a bit more?" Ospreytail recommended. Fernpaw kept trying, but missing. She took a short breather, before trying again. She leaped backward and bounced right off the tree. Something then suddenly stood in front of her, and she smashed head-first into it.

"Woah!" The cat mewed. That cat was none other than Marshpelt. "Watch where you're practicing!" The she-cat growled. "You made me drop my frog!"

"Sorry Marshpelt, I was just practicing the Jump and Pin." Fernpaw awkwardly chuckled.

"The Jump and Pin? I didn't learn that until it was almost time for my final assessment!" The golden warrior stated. Fernpaw's dark ears perked up, a gasp escaping her muzzle.

"You are almost twelve moons old." Ospreytail chuckled.

"I'm going to be a warrior soon?" Fernpaw gasped.

"Yep. So keep practicing those moves." The tom purred proudly.

"But you didn't eat all day!" Marshpelt exclaimed. "Here, take the frog. I have two voles waiting for me on the way back." The she-cat tossed the frog towards the apprentice, before trotting back towards camp.

"Maybe we should stop for the day. You could help Yarrowfall clean out the elder's den. Once you finish that frog, you can come back to camp. I'll meet you there." Ospreytail trotted off.

Fernpaw was munching down on her frog when she suddenly felt a

small jaw chomp in her tail. She'd yowl, and snap around, to scent four marsh raccoons surrounding her. One raccoon snatched up the half-eaten frog, the second one claws at her chest, and the third one but her sides. The fourth one held on to her tail. Fernpaw screeched, clawing at one of the raccoons.

Shrubs ruffled up ahead. Two new scents jump out. *Jaysong and Marshpelt!* Fernpaw recognizes their scents. The two warriors bit down on the raccoons and threw them off the blind apprentice. The raccoons regrouped and charged again, but Fernpaw managed to claw a raccoon's back, wounding it. The raccoons finally decided to scram. "Thanks for the help, you two." Fernpaw turned towards the two warriors.

"Don't count on me to save you every time," Marshpelt started, "But you're welcome." The three SwampClan cats started padding back to camp. "Hey, Fernpaw," Marshpelt sighed. "I'm sorry for being so nasty and mean to you. I was wrong. You will make a great warrior. I was just jealous that you were better at hunting than me." The golden warrior looked away, then trotted ahead. Fernpaw felt her heart flutter.

"I forgive you, Marshpelt," Fernpaw whispered under her breath.

Chapter 5

Fernpaw stumbled out of the medicine den, her raccoon bites covered in roots she'd applied herself. Flintberry was out, so she figured she'd just treat herself. She padded towards the elder's den, where Yarrowfall was scraping at the elder's nest.

"Oh, I remember when you were just a little kit," Doefoot started. "Mudstar was thinking about naming you Tansykit, but Leopardheart decided on Yarrowkit." The elder purred.

"Oh, Fernpaw." Littlenose's ears perked up. "I haven't been feeling so well," The frail elder wheezed.

"Oh, I'll get Flintber-" Fernpaw was cut short when the herb patrol came barreling in.

"Flintberry's dead!" Swanheart yowled. Fernpaw snapped around, to hear Galeface and Owlfoot carrying the medicine cat's body. The black apprentice shook, whimpers escaping her muzzle.

"H-how..." She'd step out of the elder's den.

"Those damn raccoons..." Owlfoot huffed. The warriors laid Flintberry's scarred body in the clearing, as the clans gathered. Mudstar leaped onto the Damp Rock, looking sorrowful for his fallen clanmate.

"Flintberry was an amazing medicine cat. He's served the clan for many moons." The brown leader mewed. The clan was filled with grief. "Fernpaw," Mudstar called. "You are the only cat with herb knowledge. You shall take over as a full medicine cat." Fernpaw folded her ears back, her heart breaking. "By the powers of StarClan, I name you Fernpath. This may not be the path you want, but it is in your destiny." Mudstar huffed.

"Fernpath! Fernpath!" The clan let out half-hearted cheers. Fernpath felt sadness fill her from head to tail-tip. All her hard work, for

nothing. And her former mentor was dead. Every crack in her broken heart stabbed at her chest. This day couldn't get any worse for Fernpath.

She turned back down at Flintberry's limp body. The clan sat vigil that night. They all mourned the loss of their medicine cat and shared memories they had with him. Soon enough, the sun started to rise. The sunrise patrol set out, as Littlenose and Doefoot went to bury the body.
Fernpath trudged into the medicine den, her paws heavy with grief. Her assessment was supposed to be in a few days. Now she could never live out her dream.

* * * * *

A few days later, Fernpath was grooming herself in the medicine den. Hazelkit came trotting in. "Hey, Fernpath." Hazelkit mewed.

"Hey," Fernpath grunted. "What do you need?" The she-cat held back a slightly irritated grunt.

"I scratched my leg while playing moss ball with Boulderkit." The brown she-kit held up her leg, to reveal a minor scratch. Fernpath pressed her nose against it, then turned towards the herb store. She sniffed around for the marigold. She located it and applied it to Hazelkit's scratch.
"Be careful next time, okay?" Fernpath mewed.

"I will." Hazelkit squeaked. "Thanks, Fernpath!" She then bolted out of the medicine den to return to her game of moss ball. Fernpath let out a huff of defeat. She remembered playing games with Stonepaw as kits. They'd pretend to be warriors, going into great battles. Now Fernpath could never live out that fantasy.

* * * *
"From this day forward, you shall be known as Stonestripe, for your loyalty and kindness." Mudstar yowled from the Damp Rock.

"Stonestripe! Stonestripe!" The clan cheered. Stonestripe then joined Leopardheart at the reed tunnel. Fernpath, curious about what a new warrior's hunt was like, dipped out of the dirtplace tunnel and

followed. Fernpath listened to their every movement, intrigued. Just as an earthy scent rolled into Fernpath's nose, Stonestripe let out a not-so-convincing yelp of pain.

"Ow! I got a burr in my pad!" Stonestripe dramatically squeaked.

"Need help getting it out?" Leopardheart seemed convinced, but Fernpath knew from the sound of Stonestripe's voice that she was lying.

"Oh, it's *really* deep in there." Stonestripe retorted. "I should probably go see Fernpath. I'll catch up with you later!" The new warrior then dashed off, towards the earthy scent. Fernpath followed, keeping her paw steps light.

"You're a terrible liar." An unfamiliar voice joked. It sounded like a tom, and Fernpath assumed he was talking to Stonestripe.

"Oh, hush, Coyoteclaw." Stonestripe purred. Fernpath's blind eyes widened. *Coyoteclaw!* The medicine cat recognized that name from gatherings. He was a new ValleyClan warrior. But why was he on SwampClan territory? More importantly, why was he talking to Stonestripe?

"You got your warrior name?" Coyoteclaw asked.

"Yep. You can call me Stone*stripe* now!" The she-cat purred.

"That's such a beautiful name for such a beautiful she-cat." The ValleyClan tom mewed. The two cats inched closer together.

"I wish we could truly be together." Stonestripe huffed. "But I can't leave my sister, and I know you don't want to leave ValleyClan."

"Maybe one day," Coyoteclaw started. "The warrior code might change, and we could be truly together, forever."

Chapter 6

The next day, Yarrowfall and Goosetail were sharing a water mouse in the clearing, as Stonestripe and Fernpath shared tongues. "Yarrowfall and Goosetail are getting close." Fernpath chuckled. "You think there will be new kits in the clan soon?"

"Maybe." Stonestripe mewed. Mudstar then leaped on to the Damp Rock. He yowled for the clan to gather, and so they did.

"Today, Tallears's and Blackcloud's kits are ready to become apprentices." The brown leader mewed. Coldkit, Bolderkit, Tigerkit, and Hazelkit sat at the bottom of the rock. Blackcloud and Tallears twined tails, proud. "From this day forward, until you receive your warrior names, you shall be known as Coldpaw, Boulderpaw, Shadepaw, and Tigerpaw. Coldpaw, your mentor shall be Salttail. Boulderpaw, your mentor shall be Galeface. Tigerpaw, your mentor shall be Marshpelt. Hazelpaw, your mentor shall be Yarrowfall."

"Coldpaw! Boulderpaw! Tigerpaw! Hazelpaw!" The clan chanted, as the apprentices went to touch their mentor's nose. Fernpath huffed, wishing she could train an apprentice to become a warrior. The only apprentice she'll ever get, she'll have to teach herbs to.

It was now sun high. Stonestripe volunteered to help Fernpath collect herbs. They were near the wetlands, gathering stalks of herbs. "Stonestripe?" Fernpath started.

"Yeah?" Stonestripe looked up from where she was nipping stalks.

"Listen," The black medicine cat started. "I know."

"Know?" Stonestripe was taken aback. "Know about what?" She nervously chuckled.

"About Coyoteclaw." As soon as those words left Fernpath's mouth, Stonestripe hissed.

"Coyoteclaw? Who's that?" She defensively mewed. "Ow! Got a burr in my paw. I better go see Fernpath-" She then realized that Fernpath was standing in front of her.

"Explain." Fernpath firmly mewed.

"Alright, fine." Stonestripe sighed. "I met Coyoteclaw when we were young apprentices. He was lost near the border since he snuck out without his mentor. I decided to help him out, and ever since then, we've clicked." The grey she-cat mewed. "But please, don't tell anyone, okay?"
Fernpath merely nodded and continued to pluck stalks.

* * * *
That night, the clan trotted toward the Three Stones. Stonestripe was chatting with Coyoteclaw, which made Fernpath's pelt prickle. "Fernpath! Come here!" Stonestripe called with a flick of her tail. "Fernpath, this is Coyoteclaw," The silver tabby turned her head to the brown tom. "She already knows about the *petunias,*" She mewed. Fernpath figured that was a code name for their relationship.

"You must be Stonestripe's sister! She talks a lot about you," Coyoteclaw mewed cheerily. "She always tells me how proud of you she is," Fernpath's pelt heated up in embarrassment.

"Well, it was nice to meet you," She forced a smile on her muzzle. "I should check up on some other cats. Bye," The medicine cat dipped her head and trotted off. Marshpelt was talking to a young cat, Adderleaf. Fernpath trotted over. "Hey, guys." The splotched warrior purred.

"Hey." Marshepelt mewed. "This is Adderleaf. I've known her since her first gathering." She said.
After talking for a while, Mudstar and two other leaders leaped onto the rocks.

"Let the gathering begin!" Longstar, ValleyClan leader, howled from his stone.

"May IcyClan go first?" Torrentfang, IcyClan's deputy, asked from the Three Stones. After Longstar's nod, he proceeded. "Sandstar lost

her last life protecting kits from a viscous fox. I have received my nine lives and am now Torrentstar." He huffed. "Sundapple is our deputy."

"ValleyClan shall go next. Woolystem has retired to the elder's den. Adderleaf has taken over as our lead medicine cat. We also have three new warriors, Pouncenose, Rabbitcall, and Mousemimic."

"Pouncenose! Rabbitcall! Mousemimic!" The clans cheered.

"Now SwampClan will go," Mudstar mewed. "We have a new warrior, Stonestripe,"

"Stonestripe! Stonestripe!"

"Flintberry has unfortunately died. Fernpath has taken his spot as our medicine cat,"

"But she doesn't believe in StarClan!" Aspenwing, IcyClan's medicine cat, mewed. Fernpath's mind went back to her first visit to the Moon Stream when she announced her lack of faith in StarClan. The clearing erupted in shouts of disbelief and anger.

"How could she?!"

"How is this allowed?"

"How ungrateful!"

As words of hate and anger passed through the clearing, Fernpath's ears folded. All the hateful shouting made her whimper. She didn't yell at them for their beliefs, so why do they scream at her for hers? She couldn't take it; she slipped out of the gathering and dashed away from the hissing cats. She couldn't hold back her sobs.

"Fernpath?" A voice gently called from behind her.

"What do you want?!" Fernpath hissed as she whipped her head around. Taking a heartbeat to taste the scent, she knew it was Marshpelt. "I'm sorry, I didn't mean to hiss at you," She sheepishly added.

"No, I get it, don't worry," Marshpelt trotted closer, sitting beside the medicine cat. "Stonestripe and Jaysong were trying to look for you, but they couldn't slip out of the gathering. That's why I always sit near the ends," She mewed light-heartedly. "But, in all seriousness, you really don't deserve this. I know I've said things about your beliefs when I first found out, and I'm sorry. Mudstar and Leopardheart raised me like that. They taught me that cats who don't believe in StarClan were selfish. But, you're far from selfish. You're one of the kindest cats I know!"

"You really think so?" Fernpath's heated ears perked up.

"Of course! You forgave me for treating you like frog-dung, you're always happy to help the elders, and you're still kind after all the mistreatment you've been through," The tabby she-cat put her tail on Fernpath's shoulder. They sat in silence for a bit, until Marshpelt spoke again. "You shouldn't have been forced into being a medicine cat just because you're blind. I guarantee there is no special destiny tied to your blindness. Blind or not, you're an amazing cat." She mewed. "Mudstar can be pushy with everyone. Like when I told him I like she-cats, he got mad because he wanted grandkits. He then started suggesting that I should "give toms a try" and stuff like that,"

"Well, then I guess we could deal with his pushiness together," Fenpath purred.

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A few days have passed. Fernpath laid herbs in the sun to dry. Then, Hazelpaw trotted towards her. Hazelpaw has become a regular visitor, but not because of injuries. She seemed fascinated by the way a medicine cat worked.

"Let me guess," Fernpath had scented her. "You're here to watch me?"

"Actually, I have news." Hazelpaw mewed. "I spoke to Mudstar earlier. About becoming your apprentice." Fernpath froze. An apprentice? To train as a medicine cat? "He said if it was okay with you, it would be okay with him." Hazelpaw purred.

Fernpath thought for a moment. *If there's another medicine cat, maybe once she's fully trained, I could become a warrior!* The idea struck like lightning in Fernpath's head. But then she realized a slight fault. *I'll have to teach her about StarClan. I haven't even been going to the half-moon gatherings.* "It's okay with me." Fernpath finally mewed.

"Really?" Hazelpaw squeaked like a kit. "Oh, thank you! I won't let you down!"

"I'll go speak to Mudstar now, and at the next half-moon meeting, I'll formally introduce you as my apprentice." Fernpath started to stride towards Mudstar's den.

The half-moon gathering came just within a few days. Fernpath led her new apprentice into the Moon Hollow, a place she hasn't stepped into for moons. As she entered, she heated the surprised meows from the other medicine cats.

"Finally! You're here!" Adderleaf purred.

"And you've got an apprentice." Aspenwing, the IcyClan medicine cat, mewed.

"Adderleaf, who are those cats?" A small, young voice hissed in Adderleaf's ear.

"Tawnypaw, that is Fernpath, the SwampClan medicine cat. And that's her apprentice." The ValleyClan medicine cat explained.

"This is Hazelpaw." Fernpath introduced.

"Alright, let's get to it." Aspenwing mewed. All the full medicine cats leaned over towards the Moon Stream. Fernpath, however, merely pretended to touch the water and faked a deep sleep. She couldn't keep herself from smiling. Maybe things would finally turn around.

Chapter 7

Almost five moons have passed. Fernpath had attempted to train Hazelpaw as quickly as possible. Hazelpaw shared dreams with StarClan at her second half-moon gathering and was basically treated like a full medicine cat. Now they were in the nursery, assisting Goosetail's kitting. Yarrowfall paced anxiously outside, clawing at the earth. "Congratulations." Hazelpaw purred. "Two toms and a she-kit." Hazelpaw then nodded towards Yarrowfall, who came rushing in.

"Could we name the red tom Rowankit, and the brown tom Copperkit?" The queen mewed.

"Of course. How about Amberkit for the she-kit?" Yarrowfall added. The two mates then nuzzled, as Fernpath led her apprentice outside.

"That was excellent work," Fernpath mewed. "I think you're ready to become a full medicine cat."

Hazelpaw gasped. "Already?" A purr rose in her throat. Fernpath nodded and gave a warm smile.

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It wasn't too long until the first half-moon meeting of leafbare came by. The two SwampClan cats trekked through the snow until they reached the Moon Hollow. After tey all greeted each other, Fernpath started. "Tonight, I wish to give Hazelpaw her full medicine cat name," She mewed. "Hazelpaw, from this day forward, I name you Hazelleap, for your kindness and dedication."

"Hazelleap! Hazelleap!" The medicine cats cheered. They soon touched their noses to the Moon Stream. With a smile on her muzzle, Fernpath slipped out while the other medicine cats were sleeping.

Marshpelt was on guard duty inside camp. The two dipped their

heads toward each other before Fernpath continued to pad toward Mudstar. He was sitting in the clearing, staring at the starry sky. "Mudstar!" Fernpath quietly mewed, as she dashed up to the leader. "I gave Hazelleap her full medicine cat name. I want to be a warrior again!"

"Oh?" Mudstar was obviously taken aback. His head snapped toward the black she-cat. "But, you've been a medicine cat for a while, wouldn't you like to stay like that?"

"We have another medicine cat now," Fernpath started. "And for moons, I've trained as a warrior. More than I trained as a medicine cat."

"Well, I'll have to discuss it with my senior warriors in the morning." Mudstar mewed, stifling a yawn.

It wasn't long before dawn arrived. Mudstar called his senior warriors into his den. Marshpelt decided to slip into the den, seemingly to join the discussion. After what felt like moons, Mudstar and his warriors emerged from his den. The brown leader climbed up on the Damp Rock and called for a clan meeting.

"Cats of SwampClan," He started. "Fernpath has requested to become a warrior." The clan rippled with shocked murmurs. "My senior warriors and I discussed it, and we think it would be fair to give her an assessment." Mudstar's paused for a moment. "But I shall assess her, to make sure she's retained her skills."

Mudstar then leaped off the Damp Rock, and the two cats trotted out of camp. Fernpath felt overflowed with joy. She was finally going to be a warrior. The two cats halted in the middle of the swamps. "Now, Fernpath," Mudstar pricked up his ears. "Do you hear that frog? I want you to catch it."

Fernpath eagerly nodded. She parted her jaws to taste the air. The scent of frog filled her jaws, and she crouched low, keeping her ears perked. She heard the frog's croaks getting louder and louder, until she swiped her claw out, hooking the frog. She scooped it up in her jaws and trotted back towards Mudstar.

"Great job." Mudstar purred. "We'll collect the frog later. For now, we spar." The leader mewed. Fernpath scraped earth over her frog and followed Mudstar's scent deeper into the swamps.
"Ready?" Mudstar asked. Fernpath nodded and sprang out towards her leader. She pawed at his ear before Mudstar kicked her chest. Fernpath stumbled, then gently bit his shoulder.

The sparing seemed to stretch on for moons until both cats were panting with exhaustion.
"I think you've proven yourself worthy of being a warrior." Mudstar mewed. Fernpath felt as if she would explode with excitement. Her burst of energy allowed her to dash back to camp, where Mudstar leaped onto the Damp Rock, and howled for the clan to gather.

"Fernpath showed me that she is worthy of the title of a warrior." Mudstar started. "Fernpath, from this day forward, you shall be known as Fernwish, for working so hard to achieve your wish to become a warrior. I expect her to be treated no differently."

"Fernwish! Fernwish!" The clan cheered. Fernwish was filled with indescribable joy.

"Marshpelt requested to go on Fernwish's warrior hunt. Due to the circumstances, I agreed." The brown leader added, eyeing his daughter. After a heartbeat, both cats trotted towards the reed tunnel.

Once the two cats were in the forest, Fernwish turned towards Marshpelt. "So," she started. "Why did you want to come with me?"

"Fernwish, there's something I need to tell you." Marshpelt's ears grew hot. "I talked Mudstar into making you a warrior. He really didn't want to assess you, but I managed to convince him.

"But, why?" Fernwish tilted her head.

All of the golden warrior's pelt was now heated as she answered. "Well, you know how medicine cats can't have mates," She paused for a brief moment. "Fernwish, I really care about you."

"Marshpelt," Fernwish's heart fluttered. "I care about you too."

"So... would you, maybe, want to be mates?" Marshpelt shyly asked.

"Of course! I'd love to be mates!" Fernwish purred.

Chapter 8

"It is time for three apprentices to become warriors." Mudstar howled. "Boulderpaw, Coldpaw, and Tigerpaw, do you promise to uphold the warrior code and defend your clan, even at the cost of your life?"

"I do," The three cats mewed.

"Then, by the powers of StarClan, I give you your warrior names. Boulderpaw, from this moment on you shall be known as Boulderstep, for your stealth and strength. Coldpaw, from this moment all you shall be known as Coldscar, for your bravery and battle skills. Tigerpaw, from this moment on, you shall be known as Tigerstorm, for your energy and dedication."

"Boulderstep! Coldscar! Tigerstorm!" The clan cheered. Salttail, Galeface, and Marshpelt stood next to their apprentices. Before they left, Marshpelt beckoned Fernwish to come. "I want you to experience what a normal warrior's hunt is like," Marshpelt explained before they all dipped out of camp.

While in the swamps, Tigerstorm was stalking a frog. It croaked, unaware of its demise. Tigerstorm pounced on it, catching it in her jaws. But her paws landed on slippery wetlands, causing her to tumble forward. Her body crashed into a shrub. Hearing it, Fernwish trotted over to help the young warrior up. "You okay?" She mewed. As Tigerstorm stood, the smell of death brushed her nose. "Do you smell that?"

After taking a whiff of the air, Tigerstorm nodded. "Yeah, it smells like something died." The brown she-cat replied. Almost as if it were answering her, a tiny squeak came from a nearby tree. "It sounds like it's coming from over there,"

Fernwish followed the scent and sound until she found herself in a hollowed tree. It smelled like an abandoned fox den, with a milky scent mixed with death. "Marshpelt!" Fernwish called for her mate.

"Yes, my love?" Marshpelt trotted over, only to freeze. In front of her, she saw the dead queen, with a stillborn kit by her stomach. She didn't smell of any clan, she must've been a loner. Though, there was another kit, which was alive and cold. "Oh my," Marshpelt breathed. She trotted over to the surviving kit, wrapping a tail around it. "We've got to get this kit back to camp! She'll freeze out here!"

"Here, I'll come with you," Fernwish offered. Marshpelt gently picked up the kit. "You continue your hunt," She turned to Tigerstorm. Marshpelt and Fernwish soon made it to camp, the newborn squealing in Marshpelt's jaws.

Leopardheart was sharing tongues with Mudstar when Marshpelt and Fernwish trotted into the clearing. "Is that a kit?" The leader mewed. "Who's kit is that? Where did it come from?"

"We found her next to the body of a loner. I assume the loner died giving birth to her and her stillborn brother," Fernwish explained.

"Who's gonna take care of her?" Mudstar questioned.

"We could," Marshpelt answered. "If you want to, Fernwish," She glanced at her mate.

"I don't mind," The black molly shrugged.

"Well, you'd better warm her up in the nursery before she freezes," Mudstar introjected. The two mollies nodded, trotting into the nursery. Goosetail and her kits were napping, so the two were sure to stay extra quiet. Marshpelt laid down, wrapping her tail around the kit and guiding her toward her body.

"She's a black kit, with some silver spotting," Marshpelt mewed to her blind mate. "Almost looks like a cloud is casting shade over her pelt."

"How about we name her Shadekit?" Fernwish mewed.

"That's a perfect name,"

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Two moons have passed. Shadekit was healthy, playing with the other kits. Leopardheart was sick with greencough. Ospreytail temporarily took over deputy duties.

Fernwish sat outside the nursery, listening to the kits play. They were only recently out of the nursery. Marshpelt let them try to catch her tail. They were her kin, after all. Jaysong was sitting besides Fernwish, admiring the new kits. "You know, I want to have kits someday." Jaysong mewed. "But I just can't seem to find the right cat."

"Oh hush Jaysong." Marshpelt trotted over. "You see the way Salttail looks at you." She purred.

"Salttail?" Jaysong's ears grew hot. "Why would such a pretty she-cat like her be interested in me?"

"Oh, don't act like you don't see it too." The golden she-cat purred. "The whole clan sees it. So what are you waiting for? Go talk to her." She nudged Jaysong towards Salttail, who was eating a vole near the warrior's den.

"Rawr! I'm an evil badger!" Fernwish heard Shadekit's voice squeak. "I'm gonna eat you!"

"Get out of our camp, stinky badger!" Copperkit playfully hissed.

"SwampClan, attack!" Rowankit mewed. The three kits tussled around, purring and giggling. Marshpelt then returned and sat next to her mate.

"Maybe you'll mentor one of them." Marshpelt mewed.

"Probably not. Mudstar will probably want a senior warrior to train them." Fernwish huffed.

"Mudstar would be mouse-brained to not let you mentor one of them." The golden she-cat retorted. "You're one of the best warriors in the clan." She planted a lick on her mate's cheek.

"You're right." Fernwish twined her tail with Marshpelt's and continued listening to the kits play.

Chapter 9

Fernwish was gathering moss with her new apprentice, Rowanpaw. Rowanpaw, Copperpaw, and Shadepaw were all named apprentices that morning. Swanheart was mentoring Copperpaw, and Shadepaw was being mentored by Jaysong. Fernwish was overjoyed when her best friend would be mentoring her daughter. Fernwish and Rowanpaw returned to camp with bundles of moss. "Now, I want you to change the bedding in the elder's den, then you can rest," Fernwish instructed. Rowanpaw nodded and dashed towards the elder's den.

At sunhigh, Marshepelt and Fernwish were in the swamps together. They both scented the same vole and crouched down to catch it. When they both leaped for it, they crashed into each other, and the vole scurried away. Marshepelt and Fernwish's noses ended up touching. Both of the warrior's pelts turned hot. Fernwish paused, then licked her mate's muzzle. "Aww, Fernwish." Marshepelt purred and returned the affection.

After a while, the two trotted back to camp, only to hear grief-struck yowls. "What's going on?" Fernwish's ears perked up.

"It sounds a lot like Mudstar." The fur along Marshpelt's spine rose. "Something might be wrong!" She hissed, before picking up speed. Fernwish lagged behind her, and they both burst into camp. Leopardheart was lying in the clearing with glassy, lifeless eyes. Her body was still and cold. Mudstar was sobbing over his mate's body, as Hazelleap murmured something in his ear. The clan was gathered around, sobbing and whimpering. Mudstar finally gathered the strength to leap onto the Damp Rock.

"We have lost our amazing deputy, Leopardheart, to greencough." The brown leader whimpered. "We will hold a vigil for her, but I must pick a new deputy." Mudstar sighed. "Fernwish," He sniffled. "Leopardheart always took a liking in your strength. And you make my daughter happy. So I want you to become my deputy." There were a few yowls of protest, but Fernwish nodded anyways,

accepting the role.

"Then it's settled. Fernwish shall be SwampClan's deputy."

"Fernwish! Fernwish! Fernwish!" The clan chanted. Mudstar leaped down and curled around Leopardheart's body.

* * * *

It's been three long, harsh moons. The clan lost Littlenose to old age. One day, Stonestripe and Fernwish were sharing tongues in the swamps.
"So. Fess up. I know you're expecting kits." Fernwish mewed firmly. Stonestripe's eats shot up. She has been getting plumper.

"How did you know?" The silver she-cat hissed.

"I can smell it on you." The black deputy hissed. "They're Coyoteclaw's, aren't they?"

"Fine, they are." Stonestripe huffed. "Listen, tonight I'm joining ValleyClan." She added. Fernwish's heart was torn apart by those words. "I'm in love with Coyoteclaw."

"No!" Fernwish snarled, standing. "I won't allow you to leave! Not to that flea-pelt!"

"Well too bad!" Stonestripe wailed. "I love you Fernwish. But I love Coyoteclaw too. And I know you're going to tell Mudstar now, so I might as well leave now!" Stonestripe dashed away.

Fernwish didn't bother chasing after her. Stonestripe had made her choice. Fernwish was torn apart. She just lost her sister. The one thing she had since kithood. The one cat that always supported her no matter what. Gone. Gone forever.

Chapter 10

Almost three moons has passed since Stonestripe left SwampClan. At the gathering, it was announced that Stonestripe had two kits, Fernkit and Pebblekit. Stonestripe's kitting was complicated, and so she died from blood loss. Fernwish was torn apart. SwampClan would be getting new kits soon as well. Salttail was in the nursery, expecting Jaysong's kits. Mudstar contracted a unique form of greencough from Leopardheart, where symptoms are barely noticeable until it's too late. The brown leader died rather suddenly.

Hazelleap and Fernwish padded out of camp. Fernwish shivered at the thought of returning to the Moon Hollow. She knew she had to get her nine lives, but she didn't want anything to do with StarClan. "Hazelleap," Fernwish mewed. "I'm not so sure about getting my nine lives."

"Not so sure?" Hazelleap echoed. "Fernwish, I know you'll make an amazing leader. No need to doubt yourself."

"No, I'm not doubting myself," The black she-cat added. "I don't want to get my lives. I don't need StarClan's extra power to be a noble and true leader." Fernwish felt Hazelleap's gaze burn into her pelt. "Even if I'm a leader, I'm just as important as every other cat in the clan. Why should I be the only one with nine lives?"

"I guess no cat can force you to get your nine lives." Hazelleap sighed. "But the clan might doubt you if they know you don't have nine lives." The medicine cat said. "I guess we could just sleep in the Moon Hollow until sunrise, and just tell the clan you got your lives."

"I don't want to lie to my clan. I'll still take the name Fernstar, but I want to lead without nine lives."

"Alright, Fernstar," Hazelleap responded with a smile before they turned around to trot back into camp.

The two cats trotted back to camp. Fernstar carefully trotted on to

the Damp Rock and yowled for a clan meeting. "I have chosen not to receive my nine lives," Her announcement was met with murmurs of shock, some were disapproving. "I will still take the name Fernstar, out of respect for tradition," She managed to keep her voice steady.
"Fernstar! Fernstar!" Most of the clan cheered.

"Jaysong, you've always been loyal and kind, so I want you to be my deputy." The blind leader announced.

"It would be an honor." The new deputy dipped his head.

Marshpelt and Fernstar were curled up in their new nest in the leader's den. Fernstar started to drift off until a new scent filled her nose. It was the strongest SwampClan scent she's ever smelled.

"No!" An unfamiliar voice spoke. "I warned Flintberry and Mudstar about you! Do you really want the clan to be led by blindness?" She growled.

"Who are you?" Fernstar hissed.

"I am Swampstar. I create SwampClan. And I will not let my clan be led by a blind cat!" Swampstar leaped out at Fernstar. The black leader quickly dodged. Swampstar landed on the ground with a thump. The black leader unsheathes her claws and jumped onto Swampstar. Swampstar rolled, squishing Fernstar. She swiftly bit on the blind cat's scruff. Fernstar felt a chunk of fur being torn.

"How are you supposed to lead with only one life?" Swampstar sunk her claws into Fernstar's chest, causing blood to pool around them. Fernstar struggled, rage filling her. She was still pinned down.

"I believe in you, Fernstar." Stonestripe's voice rang in her head. Hearing her sister's voice made her heart fill with hope. Fernstar raked Swampstar's belly and sunk her claws into her chest. Swampstar stumbled back, her ears pinned to her head. Fernstar then scraped the former leader's flank. She nipped at her paws and yank her tail, causing her to collapse.

"How? You're blind!" Swampstar hissed.

"I can still hear a smell, mouse-brain!" Fernstar then pinned Swampstar down.

"You... managed to pin me down?" Swampstar mewed. "You really are stronger than I thought." The large she-cat huffed. "Go on. What are you waiting for? Perform the killing bite on me!"

Fernstar hesitated. "No." She crawled off of Swampstar. "I shall spare you, as a true warrior would."

"T-thank you, Fernstar. I trust you will lead the clan well." Swampstar's voice and scent then faded.

Epilogue

Many seasons have passed. Jaysong was getting very old but refused to retire. He ended up dying of age-related heart problems.

As Fernstar leaped onto the Damp Rock, she took a whiff of the clan. It smelled, empty. Ripplefang and Frogleg died from old age. Yarrowfall was also gone, due to blackcough. Marshpelt and Goosetail retierd due to their old age. But the clan had plenty of new warriors. Swanheart and Shadefang had Pineface, and took in Rubblefur and Nettlefur as kits after they were found, and they turned out to be three very fine young warriors. Jaysong and Salttail had Barkscratch and Roseleaf, who had their father's courage and perseverance.

"Now, I must pick a new deputy." Fernstar huffed. Jaysong had only passed away in his sleep that night and was discovered that morning. Fernstar then pointed towards the scent of Rowanbird.

"Rowanbird, you're young, sweet, and loyal. You're nurturing, and we'll need a deputy and hopefully leader like that."

"I accept." The tom dipped his head.

Fernstar stepped down towards Rowanbird. She and him always had a mentor-apprentice bond together, even after Rowanbird was made a warrior. "I'm so proud of you." She purred, as if he were her own kit.